

(Milwaukee, WI)— At a press conference in Milwaukee today, Congressman Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-WI) announced that they have introduced H.R. 5706, the Child Support Pass-Through Act, to give states the option and incentive to deliver 100 percent of child support payments directly to the families they're designed to help.

Under current law, some or all of the child support owed to families that receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is split between the state and federal government as reimbursement for providing public assistance services. This policy diverts some child support funds from children and can be a disincentive for non-custodial parents to pay the support they owe because they know that part or all of their payments will not directly benefit their children. H.R. 5706 addresses this problem, enabling states to pass through the full amount of child support for TANF families.

"Child support should do just that – support children, not the federal government. We want to see the total amount of child support payments get to the parents and children for whom they are intended. That's why we are pushing for this legislation. Wisconsin's families receiving welfare assistance benefited for years from a state program that permitted 100 percent pass-through of child support. It encourages parents to promptly pay child support when all of that money goes to their children, and we need to reinstate this successful policy," Ryan said.

"This legislation builds on Wisconsin's past leadership in this area, encouraging states to distribute all child support directly to families so they can maintain self-sufficiency," said Moore. "If we are asking parents to move off welfare and take financial responsibility for their families, then we in Congress should make every effort to ensure that all child support goes directly to the families who are working so hard to reach economic stability."

U.S. Senator Herb Kohl joined Reps. Ryan and Moore at today's event to voice his support for child support pass-through legislation. For nearly ten years, Sen. Kohl has been at the forefront of the fight for child support pass-through in the U.S. Senate.

"Federal child support pass-through legislation is something I have advocated since 1997, when we secured the state's waiver," Kohl said. "Working together, it is my hope that the Wisconsin delegation can make those benefits a reality for all American families."

For many years, Wisconsin benefited from a federal waiver that enabled the state's Wisconsin Works program to pass through the full amount of child support payments to custodial parents working their way off welfare. Wisconsin's experience has demonstrated that this program was highly successful and that non-custodial parents were more likely to pay child support because they knew the money would be used directly for their children, instead of administrative expenses. A study by the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Research on Poverty supports this finding. Unfortunately, the program was discontinued at the end of 2005, when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) denied the state's request for an extension.

The recently passed Budget Reconciliation bill would allow monthly direct pass-through amounts of \$100 for one child and \$200 for two or more children, which will help some TANF families. Unfortunately, this does not cover the complete amount of child support for all families that receive TANF benefits.

Ryan and Moore's proposed legislation would essentially make the successful Wisconsin pass-through program federal law, allowing states to deliver all child support payments directly to custodial parents who receive TANF assistance.

Pass-through programs encourage non-custodial parents to pay child support because they know their money will directly benefit their children. Without pass-through, non-custodial parents are more likely to fall into arrears, custodial parents are less likely to track down the child support payments, and single-parent families struggling without the financial support of the other parent's earnings have a harder time reaching the level of economic security necessary to get off welfare.

Among those joining Reps. Ryan and Moore and Senator Kohl today to demonstrate support for 100 percent child support pass-through legislation were John Hayes, Executive Director of the Milwaukee County Department of Child Support Enforcement; Rachel Shoates of the New Hope Project; and Patti Bucko-Duenkel, a custodial parent and 1st District constituent who will benefit from H.R. 5706.

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